CLEAR: Cross-Layer Exploration for Architecting Resilience

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Abstract

CLEAR is a first of its kind framework which overcomes a major challenge in the design of digital systems that are resilient to reliability failures: achieve desired resilience targets at minimal costs (energy, power, execution time, area) by combining resilience techniques across various layers of the system stack (circuit, logic, architecture, software, algorithm). CLEAR automatically and systematically explores the large space of techniques and their combinations (586 cross-layer combinations in this paper), derives cost-effective solutions, and provides guidelines for designing new techniques. Carefully optimized combinations of circuit-level hardening, logic-level parity checking, and micro-architectural recovery provide highly cost-effective soft error resilience for general-purpose processor cores. 50× silent data corruption rate improvement is achieved at 2.1% energy cost for out-of-order (6.1% for in-order) cores, with no speed impact. Selective circuit-level hardening alone, guided by thorough application benchmark analysis, also provides cost-effective solutions (~1% additional energy cost for the same 50× improvement).

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the *cross-layer resilience challenge* for designing robust digital systems: given a set of resilience techniques at various abstraction layers (circuit, logic, architecture, software, algorithm), how does one protect a given design from radiation-induced soft errors using (perhaps) a **combination** of these techniques, **across multiple abstraction layers**, such that overall soft error resilience targets are met at minimal costs (energy, power, execution time, area)? Specific soft error resilience targets addressed in this paper are: *Silent Data Corruption* (*SDC*), where an error causes the system to output an incorrect result without error indication; and, *Detected but Uncorrected Error* (*DUE*), where an error is detected (e.g., by a resilience technique or a system crash or hang) but is not recovered automatically without user intervention.

The need for *cross-layer resilience*, where multiple error resilience techniques from different layers of the system stack cooperate to achieve cost-effective error resilience, is articulated in several publications (e.g., [Carter 10, Gupta 14, Pedram 12]). There are numerous publications on error resilience techniques, many of which span multiple abstraction layers. However, these publications mostly describe specific implementations (e.g., [Lu 82, Meaney 05, Sinharoy 11]. Cross-layer resilience implementations in commercial systems are often based on "designer experience" or "historical practice." There exists no comprehensive framework to systematically address the cross-layer resilience challenge. Creating such a framework is difficult. It must encompass the entire design flow end-to-end, from comprehensive and thorough analysis of various combinations of error resilience techniques all the way to layout-level implementations, such that one can (automatically) determine which resilience technique or combination of techniques (at the same or across different abstraction layers) should be chosen. Such a framework is essential in order to answer important cross-layer resilience questions such as:

1. Is cross-layer resilience the best approach for achieving a given resilience target at low cost?
2. Are all cross-layer solutions equally cost-effective? If not, which cross-layer solutions are the best?
3. How do cross-layer choices change depending on application-level energy, latency, and area constraints?
4. How can one create a cross-layer resilience solution that is cost-effective across a wide variety of application workloads?
5. Are there general guidelines for new error resilience techniques to be cost-effective?

CLEAR (Cross-Layer Exploration for Architecting Resilience) is a first of its kind framework, which addresses the cross-layer resilience challenge [Cheng 16a, 16b]. In this paper, we focus on the use of CLEAR for radiation-induced soft errors in terrestrial environments.

Although the soft error rate of an SRAM cell or a flip-flop stays roughly constant or even decreases over technology generations, the system-level soft error rate increases with increased integration [Mitra 14, Seifert 12] and can increase when lower supply voltages are used to improve energy efficiency [Mahatme 13, Pawlowski 14]. We focus on *flip-flop soft errors* because design techniques to protect them are generally expensive. Coding techniques are routinely used for protecting on-chip memories. Combinational logic circuits are significantly less susceptible to soft errors and do not pose a concern [Gill 09, Seifert 12]. We address both single-event upsets (*SEUs*) and single-event multiple upsets (*SEMUs*) [Lee 10, Pawlowski 14]. While CLEAR can address soft errors in various digital components of a complex System-on-a-Chip (e.g., uncore [Cho 15], hardware accelerators), this paper focuses on soft errors in processor cores.

To demonstrate the effectiveness and practicality of CLEAR, we explore 586 cross-layer combinations using ten representative error detection/correction techniques and four hardware error recovery techniques spanning various layers of the system stack: circuit, logic, architecture, software, and algorithm (Fig. 1). Our exploration encompasses over 9 million flip-flop soft error injections into two diverse processor core architectures: a simple in-order SPARC Leon3 core (*InO-core*) [Leon] and a complex super-scalar out-of-order Alpha IVM core (*OoO-core*) [Wang 04], across 18 benchmarks. Such extensive exploration enables us to conclusively answer the above cross-layer resilience questions:

1. For a wide range of error resilience targets, optimized cross-layer combinations can provide low cost solutions for soft errors.
2. Not all cross-layer solutions are cost-effective.
   a. For general-purpose processor cores, a carefully optimized combination of selective circuit-level hardening, logic-level parity checking, and micro-architectural recovery provides a highly effective cross-layer resilience solution.
   b. When the application space is restricted to matrix operations, a combination of Algorithm Based Fault Tolerance (ABFT) correction, selective circuit-level hardening, logic-level parity checking, and micro-architectural recovery can be highly effective.
   c. Selective circuit-level hardening, guided by a thorough analysis of the effects of soft errors on application benchmarks, provides a highly effective soft error resilience approach.
3. The above conclusions about cost-effective soft error resilience techniques largely hold across various application characteristics (e.g., latency constraints despite errors in soft real-time applications).
4. One must address the challenge of potential mismatch between application benchmarks vs. applications in the field, especially when targeting high degrees of resilience. We overcome this challenge using various flavors of circuit-level hardening techniques (Sec. 4).
5. Cost-effective approaches discussed above provide bounds that new soft error resilience techniques must achieve to be competitive.

2. CLEAR Framework

Figure 1 gives an overview of the CLEAR framework.

2.1 Reliability Analysis

We use flip-flop soft error injections for reliability analysis (radiation test results confirm that injection of single bit-flips into flip-flops closely models soft error behaviors in actual systems [Bottoni 14, Sanda 08]). Flip-flop-level error injection is crucial since naïve high-level error injections can be highly inaccurate [Cho 13].

We injected over 9 million flip-flop soft errors into the RTL of the processor designs using three BEE3 FPGA emulation systems and also using mixed-mode simulations on the Stampede supercomputer (TACC at The University of Texas at Austin) (similar to [Cho 13, Wang 04]). This ensures that error injection results have less than a 0.1% margin of error with a 95% confidence interval per benchmark. Errors are injected uniformly into all flip-flops and application

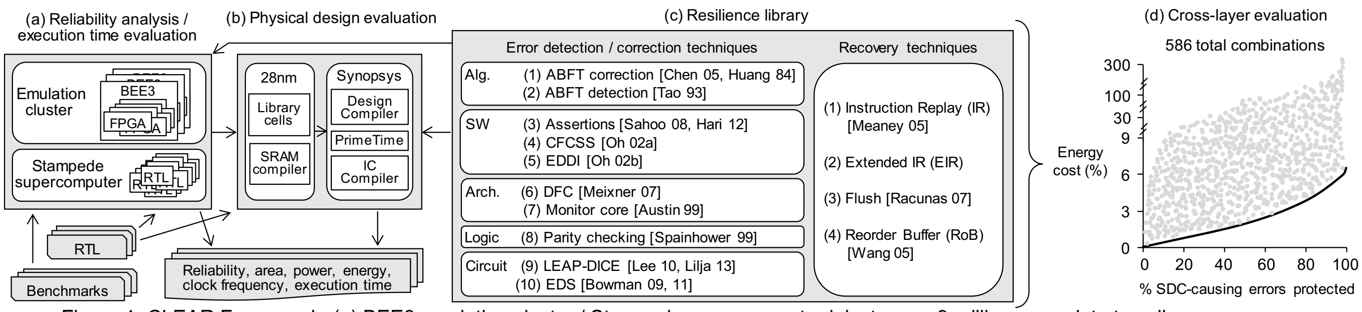

Figure 1. CLEAR Framework: (a) BEE3 emulation cluster / Stampede supercomputer injects over 9 million errors into two diverse processor architectures running 18 full-length application benchmarks. (b) Accurate physical design evaluation accounts for resilience overheads. (c) Comprehensive resilience library consisting of ten error detection / correction techniques + four hardware error recovery techniques. (d) Example illustrating thorough exploration of 586 cross-layer combinations with varying energy costs vs. percentage of SDC-causing errors protected.

regions, to mimic real world scenarios.

The SPECINT2000 [Henning 00] and DARPA PERFECT [DARPA] benchmark suites are used for evaluation[1]. The PERFECT suite complements SPEC by adding applications targeting signal and image processing domains. We ran benchmarks in their entirety.

Flip-flop soft errors can result in the following outcomes [Cho 13, Sanda 08, Wang 04]: **Vanished -** normal termination and output files match error-free runs, **Output Mismatch (OMM) -** normal termination, but output files are different from error-free runs, **Unexpected Termination (UT) -** program terminates abnormally, **Hang -** no termination or output within 2× the nominal execution time, **Error Detection (ED) -** an employed resilience technique flags an error, but the error is not recovered using hardware recovery.

Any error that results in OMM causes SDC. Any error that results in UT, Hang, or ED causes DUE (there are no ED outcomes if no error detection technique is employed). The resilience of a protected (new) design compared to an unprotected (original, baseline) design can be defined in terms of *SDC improvement* (Eq. 1a) or *DUE improvement* (Eq. 1b). Techniques that increase execution time or add flip-flops increase the susceptibility of the design to soft-errors. To accurately account for this situation, we calculate, based on [Schirmeier 15], a correction factor γ (where $\gamma \geq 1$), which is applied to ensure a fair and accurate comparison[2]. Reporting SDC and DUE improvements allows our results to be agnostic to absolute error rates.

$$SDC\ improvement = \frac{(original\ OMM\ count)}{(new\ OMM\ count)} \times \gamma^{-1} \qquad \text{(Eq. 1a)}$$

$$DUE\ improvement = \frac{(original\ (UT+Hang)\ count)}{(new\ (UT+Hang+ED)\ count)} \times \gamma^{-1} \qquad \text{(Eq. 1b)}$$

2.2 Execution Time Evaluation

Execution time is estimated using FPGA emulation and RTL simulation. Applications are run to completion. Our design methodology maintains clock speed.

2.3 Physical Design Evaluation

Synopsys design tools (Design Compiler, IC compiler, Primetime) along with a commercial 28nm technology library (with corresponding SRAM compiler) is used to perform synthesis, place-and-route, and power analysis. *Synthesis and place-and-route* (*SP&R*) was run for all configurations of the design (before and after adding resilience techniques) to ensure all constraints of the original design (e.g., timing and DRC) were met for the resilient designs.

2.4 Resilience Library

We carefully chose ten error detection and correction and four hardware error recovery techniques. These techniques largely cover the space of existing soft error resilience techniques. The characteristics of each technique when used as a *standalone solution* (e.g., an error detection / correction technique by itself or, optionally, in conjunction with a recovery technique) are presented in Table 1.

Circuit: The *hardened flip-flops* (LEAP-DICE, Light Hardened LEAP) in Table 2 are designed to tolerate SEUs and SEMUs [Lee 10, Lilja 13]. *Error Detection Sequential* (*EDS*) [Bowman 09, 11] can be used to detect flip-flop soft errors (in addition to timing errors).

Table 2. Resilient flip-flops.

Type	Soft Error Rate	Area	Power	Delay	Energy
Baseline	1	1	1	1	1
Light Hardened LEAP (LHL)	2.5×10^{-1}	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3
LEAP-DICE	2.0×10^{-4}	2.0	1.8	1	1.8
EDS[8]	~100% detect	1.5	1.4	1	1.4

Table 1. Individual resilience techniques: costs and improvements when implemented as a standalone solution.

Layer	Technique		Area cost	Power cost	Energy cost	Exec. time impact	Avg. SDC improvement	Avg. DUE improvement	False positive
Circuit[3]	LEAP-DICE (no additional recovery needed)	InO OoO	0-9.3% 0-6.5%	0-22.4% 0-9.4%	0-22.4% 0-9.4%	0%	1× - 5,000×	1× - 5,000×	0%
	EDS (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO OoO	0-10.7% 0-12.2%	0-22.9% 0-11.5%	0-22.9% 0-11.5%	0%	1× - 100,000×	0.1× - 1×	0%
	EDS (with IR recovery)	InO OoO	0-16.7% 0-12.3%	0-43.9% 0-11.6%	0-43.9% 0-11.6%	0%	1× - 100,000×	1× - 100,000×	0%
Logic[3]	Parity (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO OoO	0-10.9% 0-14.1%	0-23.1% 0-13.6%	0-23.1% 0-13.6%	0%	1× - 100,000×	0.1× - 1×	0%
	Parity (with IR recovery)	InO OoO	0-26.9% 0-14.2%	0-44% 0-13.7%	0-44% 0-13.7%	0%	1× - 100,000×	1× - 100,000×	0%
Arch.	DFC (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO OoO	3% 0.2%	1% 0.1%	7.3% 7.2%	6.2% 7.1%	1.2×	0.5×	0%
	DFC (with EIR recovery)	InO OoO	37% 0.4%	33% 0.2%	41.2% 7.3%	6.2% 7.1%	1.2×	1.4×	0%
	Monitor core (with RoB recovery)	OoO	9%	16.3%	16.3%	0%	19×	15×	0%
Soft-ware[4]	Software assertions for general-purpose processors (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO	0%	0%	15.6%	15.6%[5]	1.5×	0.6×	0.003%
	CFCSS (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO	0%	0%	40.6%	40.6%	1.5×	0.5×	0%
	EDDI (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO	0%	0%	110%	110%	37.8×[6]	0.3×	0%
Alg.	ABFT correction (no additional recovery needed)	InO OoO	0%	0%	1.4%	1.4%	4.3×	1.2×	0%
	ABFT detection (without recovery - unconstrained)	InO OoO	0%	0%	24%	1-56.9%[7]	3.5×	0.5×	0%

[1] 11 SPEC / 7 PERFECT (InO), 8 SPEC / 3 PERFECT (OoO).
[2] Research literature commonly considers γ=1. We use true γ values, but our conclusions hold for γ=1 as well (latter is optimistic).
[3] Circuit and logic techniques have tunable costs/resilience
[4] LLVM compiler no longer supports the Alpha architecture (OoO-core).
[5] Some assertions (e.g., [Sahoo 08]) have false positives (i.e., error reported during error-free run). Execution time impact reported discounts false positives.
[6] EDDI with store-readback [Lin 14]. 3.3× SDC / 0.4× DUE improvement without.
[7] Error detection checks may require computationally-expensive calculations.
[8] EDS costs for the flip-flop only. Error signal routing, delay buffers increase cost.

Logic: *Parity checking* detects errors by checking flip-flop inputs and outputs [Spainhower 99]. Our design heuristics ([Cheng 16b]) reduce the cost of parity and ensure that clock frequency is maintained as in the original design. SEMUs are minimized through layouts that ensure a minimum spacing (the size of one flip-flop) between flip-flops checked by the same parity checker [Amusan 09].

Architecture: Our implementation of *Data Flow Checking* (*DFC*) includes *Control Flow Checking (CFC)*, and resembles [Meixner 07]. *Monitor cores* are specialized checker cores that validate instructions executed by the main core [Austin 99, Lu 82]. We analyze monitor cores similar to [Austin 99] and confirmed (via IPC estimation) that our monitor core implementation does not stall the main core.

Software: *Software assertions for general-purpose processors* check program variables to ensure their values are valid. We combine assertions from [Hari 12, Sahoo 08]. *Control Flow Checking by Software Signatures* (*CFCSS*) [Oh 02a] and *Error Detection by Duplicated Instructions* (*EDDI*) [Oh 2b] are implemented via compiler modification. We utilize EDDI with store-readback [Lin 14].

Algorithm: *Algorithm Based Fault Tolerance (ABFT)* can detect (*ABFT detection*) or detect and correct errors (*ABFT correction*) through algorithm modifications [Chen 05, Huang 84, Tao 93].

Recovery: We consider two recovery scenarios: *bounded latency*, i.e., an error must be recovered within a fixed period of time after its occurrence, and *unconstrained*, i.e., where no latency constraints exist and errors are recovered externally once detected (no hardware recovery is required). Bounded latency recovery requires one of the following hardware recovery techniques (Table 3): *flush* or *Reorder Buffer* (*RoB*) recovery (flushing non-committed instructions followed by re-execution) [Racunas 07, Wang 05]; *instruction replay* (*IR*) or *extended instruction replay* (*EIR*) recovery (instruction checkpointing to rollback and replay instructions) [Meaney 05]. EIR is an extension of IR with additional buffers required by DFC for recovery. Flush and RoB are unable to recover from errors detected after the memory write stage of InO-cores or after the reorder buffer of OoO-cores, respectively (these errors will have propagated to architecture visible states). Hence, LEAP-DICE is used to protect flip-flops in these pipeline stages when using flush/RoB recovery.

Table 3. Hardware error recovery costs.

Core	Type	Area	Power	Energy	Recovery latency
InO	Instruction Replay (IR) recovery	16%	21%	21%	47 cycles
	EIR recovery	34%	32%	32%	47 cycles
	Flush recovery	0.6%	0.9%	1.8%	7 cycles
OoO	Instruction Replay (IR) recovery	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	104 cycles
	EIR recovery	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	104 cycles
	Reorder Buffer (ROB) recovery	0.01%	0.01%	0.01%	64 cycles

3. Cross-Layer Combinations

CLEAR uses a top-down approach to explore the cost-effectiveness of various cross-layer combinations. For example, resilience techniques at upper layers of the system stack (e.g., ABFT correction) are applied before moving down the stack to lower layers (e.g., an optimized combination of logic parity checking, circuit-level LEAP-DICE, and micro-architectural recovery). This approach (example shown in Fig. 2) ensures that resilience techniques from various layers of the stack effectively interact with one another. Resilience techniques from the algorithm, software, and architecture layers of the stack generally protect multiple flip-flops (determined using error injection); however, a designer typically has little control over the specific subset protected. Using multiple resilience techniques from these layers can lead to situations where a given flip-flop may be protected (sometimes unnecessarily) by multiple techniques. At the logic and circuit layers, fine-grained protection is available since these techniques can be applied selectively to individual flip-flops (those not sufficiently protected by higher-level techniques).

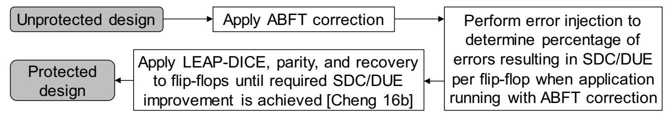

Figure 2. Cross-layer methodology example for combining ABFT correction, LEAP-DICE, logic parity, and micro-architectural recovery.

Among the 586 cross-layer combinations explored using CLEAR, a highly promising approach combines selective circuit-level hardening using LEAP-DICE, logic parity, and micro-architectural recovery (flush recovery for InO-cores, RoB recovery for OoO-cores). Thorough error injection using application benchmarks is critical in selecting flip-flops protected using these techniques. [Cheng 16b] details the methodology for creating this combination.

When the application space targets specific algorithms (e.g., matrix operations), a cross-layer combination of LEAP-DICE, parity, ABFT correction, and micro-architectural error recovery (flush/RoB) provides additional energy savings (Table 4). Since ABFT correction performs in-place error correction, no separate recovery mechanism is required for ABFT correction. When targeting DUE improvement, ABFT correction provides no energy savings for the OoO-core. This is because ABFT correction performs checks at set locations in the program (e.g., a DUE resulting from an invalid pointer access can cause an immediate program termination before a check is invoked).

Since most applications are not amenable to ABFT correction, the flip-flops protected by ABFT correction must also be protected by techniques such as LEAP-DICE or parity (or combinations thereof) for processors targeting general-purpose applications. This requires circuit hardening techniques (e.g., [Mitra 05, Zhang 06]) with the ability to selectively operate in an error-resilient mode (high resilience, high energy) when ABFT is unavailable, or in an economy mode (low resilience, low power mode) when ABFT is available. However, the overheads outweigh benefits (details in [Cheng 16b]).

Relative benefits seen in Table 4 are consistent across benchmarks and over the range of SDC/DUE improvements. Overheads in Table 4 are small because we reported the most energy-efficient resilience solutions. Most of the 586 combinations are far costlier.

Table 4[9]. Costs vs. SDC and DUE improvements for efficient resilience techniques.
A (area cost %), P (power cost %), E (energy cost %)

			Bounded latency recovery										Unconstrained recovery[10]										Exec. time impact
			SDC improvement					DUE improvement					SDC improvement					DUE improvement					
			2	5	50	500	max	2	5	50	500	max	2	5	50	500	max	2	5	50	500	max	
InO	Selective hardening using LEAP-DICE	A	0.8	1.8	2.9	3.3	9.3	0.7	1.7	3.8	5.1	9.3	0.8	1.8	2.9	3.3	9.3	0.7	1.7	3.8	5.1	9.3	0%
		P	2	4.3	7.3	8.2	22.4	1.5	3.8	9.5	12.5	22.4	2	4.3	7.3	8.2	22.4	1.5	3.8	9.5	12.5	22.4	
		E	2	4.3	7.3	8.2	22.4	1.5	3.8	9.5	12.5	22.4	2	4.3	7.3	8.2	22.4	1.5	3.8	9.5	12.5	22.4	
	LEAP-DICE + logic parity (+ flush recovery)	A	0.7	1.7	2.5	3	8	0.6	1.5	3.6	4.4	8	0.7	1.6	2.4	2.8	7.6						
		P	1.9	3.9	6.1	6.7	17.9	1.5	3.4	8.4	10.4	17.9	1.9	3.8	5.9	6.5	17.2	-	-	-	-	-	0%
		E	1.9	3.9	6.1	6.7	17.9	1.5	3.4	8.4	10.4	17.9	1.9	3.8	5.9	6.5	17.2						
	ABFT correction + LEAP-DICE + logic parity (+ flush recovery)	A	0	0.4	1.0	1.2	8	0.3	0.4	1.5	2.7	8	0	0.4	0.9	1.1	7.6						
		P	0	0.7	1.7	1.8	17.9	1	1	3.3	5.7	17.9	0	0.7	1.6	1.8	17.2	-	-	-	-	-	1.4%
		E	1.4	2.2	3.1	3.2	19.6	2.4	2.4	4.8	7.2	19.6	1.4	2.2	3	3.2	18.8						
OoO	Selective hardening using LEAP-DICE	A	1.1	1.3	2.2	2.4	6.5	1.3	1.6	3.1	3.6	6.5	1.1	1.3	2.2	2.4	6.5	1.3	1.6	3.1	3.6	6.5	0%
		P	1.5	1.7	3.1	3.5	9.4	2	2.3	4.2	5.1	9.4	1.5	1.7	3.1	3.5	9.4	2	2.3	4.2	5.1	9.4	
		E	1.5	1.7	3.1	3.5	9.4	2	2.3	4.2	5.1	9.4	1.5	1.7	3.1	3.5	9.4	2	2.3	4.2	5.1	9.4	
	LEAP-DICE + logic parity (+ ROB recovery)	A	0.06	0.1	1.4	2.2	4.9	0.5	0.7	2.6	3	4.9	0.06	0.1	1.4	2.2	4.9						
		P	0.1	0.2	2.1	2.4	7	0.1	0.1	2	1.8	7	0.1	0.2	2.1	2.4	7	-	-	-	-	-	0%
		E	0.1	0.2	2.1	2.4	7	0.1	0.1	2	1.8	7	0.1	0.2	2.1	2.4	7						
	ABFT correction + LEAP-DICE + logic parity (+ ROB recovery)	A	0	0.01	0.3	0.5	4.9	0.4	0.6	2.1	3	4.9	0	0.01	0.3	0.5	4.8						
		P	0	0.01	0.5	0.8	7	0.1	0.1	3	1.6	7	0	0.01	0.5	0.8	6.9	-	-	-	-	-	1.4%
		E	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.2	8.5	1.5	1.5	4.2	3	8.5	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.2	8.4						

[9] Costs generated per benchmark and averaged. Relative std. deviation: 0.6-3.1%.
[10] DUE improvements not possible when detection-only techniques are used in an unconstrained recovery scenario.

4. Application Benchmark Dependence

The most cost-effective resilience techniques are guided by error injection using application benchmarks. What happens when the applications in the field do not match application benchmarks? We refer to this situation as *application benchmark dependence*. To quantify this dependence, we randomly selected 4 (of 11) SPEC benchmarks as a *training set*, and used the remaining 7 as a *validation set*. Resilience is implemented using the training set and the resulting design's resilience is determined using the validation set. We used 50 training/validation pairs. Table 5 indicates that validated SDC improvement is generally underestimated. Fortunately, when targeting <10× SDC improvement, the underestimation is <4%. This is due to the fact that the most vulnerable 10% of flip-flops (i.e., the flip-flops that result in the most SDCs or DUEs) are consistent across benchmarks. Benchmark sensitivity may be minimized by training using additional benchmarks or through better benchmarks (e.g., [Mirkhani 15]). An alternative approach is to apply our CLEAR framework using available benchmarks, and then replace all remaining unprotected flip-flops using LHL (Table 2). This enables our resilient designs to meet (or exceed) resilience targets at <1.2% additional cost for SDC improvements >10×.

Table 5. SDC improvement, cost before and after applying LHL to otherwise unprotected flip-flops.

Core	SDC improvement			Cost before LHL insertion		Cost after LHL insertion	
	Train	Validate	After LHL	Area	Power / Energy	Area	Power / Energy
InO	5×	4.8×	19.3×	1.6%	3.6%	3.1%	5.7%
	50×	38.9×	152.3×	2.4%	5.7%	3.3%	6.9%
	500×	433.1×	1,326.1×	2.9%	6.3%	3.4%	7.1%
	Max	5,568.9×	5,568.9×	8%	17.9%	8%	17.9%
OoO	5×	4.8×	35.1×	0.1%	0.2%	0.9%	1.8%
	50×	32.1×	204.3×	1.4%	2.1%	1.9%	2.7%
	500×	301.4×	1084.1×	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.8%
	Max	6,625.8×	6,625.8×	4.9%	7%	4.9%	7%

5. Conclusions

CLEAR is a first of its kind cross-layer resilience framework that enables effective exploration of a wide variety of resilience techniques and their combinations across several layers of the system stack. Our extensive cross-layer resilience studies demonstrate:

1. A carefully optimized combination of selective circuit-level hardening, logic-level parity checking, and micro-architectural recovery provides a highly cost-effective soft error resilience solution for general-purpose processors.

2. Selective circuit-level hardening alone, guided by thorough analysis of the effects of soft errors on application benchmarks, also provides a cost-effective soft error resilience solution (with ~1% additional energy cost for the same 50× SDC improvement).

3. Algorithm Based Fault Tolerance (ABFT) correction combined with selective circuit-level hardening, logic-level parity checking, and micro-architectural recovery can further improve soft error resilience costs. However, existing ABFT correction techniques can only be used for a few applications limiting the applicability of this approach.

4. We can derive bounds on energy costs vs. degree of resilience (SDC or DUE improvements) that new soft error resilience techniques must achieve to be competitive (shown in Fig. 3).

5. It is crucial that the benefits and costs of new resilience techniques are evaluated thoroughly and correctly. Detailed analysis (e.g., flip-flop-level error injection or layout-level cost quantification) identifies hidden weaknesses that are often overlooked.

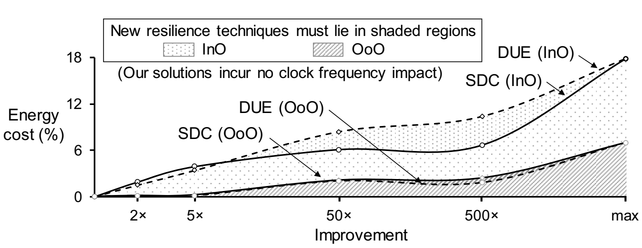

Figure 3. New resilience techniques must have cost and improvement tradeoffs that lie within the shaded regions bounded by LEAP-DICE + parity + micro-architectural recovery.

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